

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 225426

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MU, US

SUBJECT: MASIRAH ISLAND

REFERENCE: MUSCAT 1118

1. DESK OFFICER WAS CALLED AUGUST 11 BY A MR. STETLER OF "INTER-NEWS SERVICE" WHICH PUBLISHES BI-WEEKLY "INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN." STETLER WISHED TO KNOW STATUS OF US REQUEST FOR USE OF MASIRAH ISLAND. WITHOUT VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION, DESK OFFICER RESPONDED ALONG LINES OF PREPARED GUIDANCE (SEE BELOW), STRESSING THAT USE WOULD BE OCCASIONAL, THAT WE WOULD CONSULT WITH OMANGOV EACH TIME AND THAT US HAD NO PERMANENT PRESENCE OR PLANS TO CREATE ONE. TO QUESTION AS TO WHAT WOULD HAPPEN AFTER BRITISH LEAVE, HE SAID THAT THAT WAS HARD TO SAY FOR SURE; HE PERSONALLY SAW NO REASON FOR ATTITUDE OF OMANGOV TO CHANGE APPRECIABLY SINCE WE HAD BEEN IN FREQUENT TOUCH WITH THEM ON MATTER.

2. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF GUIDANCE DATED JULY 20, 1976.  
QUOTE: QUESTION: DOES THE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY VIEWS ON  
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THE REPORT THAT THE BRITISH WILL BE LEAVING THEIR BASES IN

OMAN AT SALALAH AND MASIRAH BY MARCH 31, 1977? WERE WE INFORMED ABOUT THIS DECISION?

ANSWER: THIS IS REALLY A MATTER THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE BRITISH. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE DECISION IS BASED ON A CABINET DECISION TAKEN IN 1974 FURTHER TO REDUCE BRITISH MILITARY COMMITMENTS EAST OF SUEZ. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT IS IN LINE WITH THAT POLICY. WE WERE INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF THE BRITISH DECISION.

Q: IF I RECALL, WASN'T THERE A REPORT ABOUT A YEAR AND ONE-HALF AGO ABOUT OUR MAKING USE OF THE AIRBASE FACILITIES AT MASIRAH? WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

A: ON JANUARY 22, 1975, THE DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN SAID THAT WE HAD RAISED WITH OMANI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OUR INTEREST IN HAVING PERMISSION FOR US MILITARY AIRCRAFT TO USE THE BRITISH LANDING FACILITY AT MASIRAH ON AN OCCASIONAL BASIS. RECENTLY THERE WAS ONE FLIGHT THERE. THIS FLIGHT OCCURRED AFTER OBTAINING FLIGHT APPROVAL FROM THE OMANI GOVERNMENT. WE EXPECT FLIGHTS WILL CONTINUE ON AN OCCASIONAL BASIS FOLLOWING NORMAL FLIGHT CLEARANCE PROCEDURES.

Q: WHO GIVES FLIGHT CLEARANCES? WAS YOUR FLIGHT TIMED WITH THE BRITISH TO BEGIN AS THEY GIVE UP THE FACILITY?

A: AS I HAVE NOTED, WE FIRST RAISED THE QUESTION OF POSSIBLE OCCASIONAL FLIGHTS TO MASIRAH ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. TECHNICALLY, FLIGHT CLEARANCE IS OBTAINED FROM THE BRITISH WHO HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPERATING THE FACILITY AT MASIRAH. HOWEVER, THE FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS ARE ALSO MADE IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE OMANI GOVERNMENT.

Q: WITH THE BRITISH LEAVING, IS THE US GOING TO REPLACE THEM?

A: NO. THE USG HAS NO INTENTION, AS WAS STATED IN JANUARY 1975, OF ESTABLISHING A BASE OR ANY PERMANENT PRESENCE ON MASIRAH.  
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Q: WELL, IF THE BRITISH LEAVE, WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT? CAN WE STILL MAKE USE OF THE FACILITY?

A: WE WILL HAVE TO SEE ABOUT THAT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE OMANI GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO KEEP THE AIRFIELD OPERATING AND USE IT POSSIBLY FOR TRAINING PURPOSES.

Q: ARE THERE ANY US MILITARY PERSONNEL STATIONED ON MASIRAH, OR ARE THERE PLANS TO STATION ANY THERE?

A: NO.

Q: WHY DID WE START USING THIS FACILITY ANYWAY?

A: IT WAS DETERMINED THAT OCCASIONAL STOPS AT MASIRAH WOULD PROVIDE NEEDED FLEXIBILITY FOR OUR NORMAL NAVAL OPERATIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

Q: WHAT IS THE INTENDED FREQUENCY OF THESE FLIGHTS? YOU SAY THERE HAS BEEN ONE.

A: I CAN'T GET INTO SPECIFICS. WHAT I CAN SAY IS THAT THE FLIGHTS WILL BE OCCASIONAL.

Q: DO THESE FLIGHTS MEAN THAT THE US IS INCREASING ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN?

A: NO INCREASE IS CONTEMPLATED.

Q: WHAT KIND OF US AIRCRAFT HAS USED MASIRAH?

A: I AM TOLD IT IS A P-3 AIRCRAFT. YOU WILL HAVE TO ASK THE PENTAGON FOR MORE SPECIFICS ON THIS TYPE OF PLANE.

Q: TO WHAT COMMAND ARE THESE P-3 AIRCRAFT ASSIGNED AND WHERE DO THEY ORIGINATE?

A: THEY ARE ASSIGNED TO THE PATROL FORCE OF THE SEVENTH FLEET AND FLIGHTS ORIGINATE FROM THE NAVY'S FACILITY AT CONFIDENTIAL

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DIEGO GARCIA.

Q: DID THE P-3 FLIGHT WHICH USED THE FACILITY AT MASIRAH COME FROM DIEGO GARCIA?

A: YES.

Q: NOW THAT YOU HAVE THE BASE AT DIEGO GARCIA AND YOU ARE BEGINNING TO MAKE USE OF MASIRAH, DOESN'T THIS MEAN THAT THE US IS BUILDING A NEW BASE SYSTEM IN THE INDIAN OCEAN?

A: NOT AT ALL. UNQUOTE.

3. WHILE WE UNDERSTAND "INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN" (VOL. 3 'O. 15) CARRIED ARTICLE ON SUBJECT, TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

NO MAJOR NEWS SERVICES HAVE PICKED UP STORY. KISSINGER

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